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Cured or Coffin – NH Bremerton Tobacco Cessation is a Year-Round effort

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(NO COMMENTS)

By Douglas H. Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton Public Affairs



The Great American Smoke Out this year is on Nov. 20.

Heard the old joke that there once was a Navy nicotine user who asked his provider one day during a routine physical examination, “What’s the end result of having a smoking habit?”

“Coffin,” replied the physician.

The smoker didn’t get it.

There’s too many who don’t get it...even when it’s too late and they have a sudden epiphany that’s lost in emphysema.

Such goes the never ending, on-going awareness campaign and commitment to tobacco cessation for staff and beneficiaries carried out by Pat Graves, [Naval Hospital Bremerton’s Tobacco Cessation](#) Facilitator.

The [Great American Smoke Out](#) this year is on Nov. 20, and Graves again will use the

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The purpose and intent of holding this event is to have those who use tobacco to at least consider quitting for the day.

designated date to focus on the perils of puffing, the danger of dipping, and hazards to health from e-cigarette toxic vapors. Dispelling stubborn smoke-screens can be strenuous. Old habits die hard. But Graves is persistent, patient and passionate to help anyone quit.

“The purpose and intent of holding this event is to have those who use tobacco to at least consider quitting for the day. From just one day can come the empowerment to hopefully quit for a lifetime. Quitting is a process that is not always easy. It requires time, patience and a desire to change. We have the tools and experience to help anyone succeed,” said Graves, who has creatively provided encouragement for over seven years at NHB, such as the fun-filled ‘Mileage to Freedom Challenge.

“Several years ago we did a ‘Mileage to Freedom Challenge’ for our staff who convinced a tobacco user to quit for 24-hours. They then participated as five-member teams having each member compete on a stationary bike, elliptical machine or treadmill for an overall total of 10 minutes.

Why the ten minutes? According to Graves, just 10 minutes of moderate intensity exercise can reduce the desire to smoke or dip.

“It’s about moving more and smoking less. Exercise can diminish nicotine withdrawal symptoms and help avoid relapse. Exercise can also reduce the intensity of withdrawal symptoms,” Graves said.

The year NHB’s recognition of GASO features a 5K Fitness Run, static displays on the Quarterdeck and ‘Ciggy Butt’ making the rounds to remind people on the perils of tobacco usage.



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cigarettes that are sold as a “safer” way to enjoy nicotine, but despite the marketing efforts, there is evidence being documented that like any other tobacco-related product, it is not what it is meant to be.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website and in ‘Chest Journal, official publication of the American College of Chest Physicians,’ E-cigarettes may sound like a better alternative to tobacco and are marketed as such by claiming the “vapor” in e-cigarettes to be simple water vapor. Not entirely true. There are commercially available e-cigarettes made with a base solution of PG or VG (propylene glycol or vegetable glycol), or the material commonly used in theater productions or haunted houses to make “smoke” effects, never intended to be a daily, frequent, directly inhaled substance.

Further, E-cigarettes are perceived by some and marketed as “safe” compared to regular tobacco. A study published in the Chest Journal notes that evaluations of the nicotine solution and vapor content of e-cigarettes found primary components of propylene glycol, glycerin, and nicotine, along with other chemicals identified in trace amounts include N-nitrosamines, diethylene glycol, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, anabasine, myosmine, and β-nicotryne. Many of these compounds are carcinogenic and harmful to humans.

“One of the main concerns is that the toxins from tobacco smoke or e-cig “vapor” are going directly into someone’s lungs. And every cigarette or e-cigarette that is smoked, the chemicals in the smoke cause mutations in the body and more significantly (directly) into the lungs. So basically a person’s ingesting cancer causing agents with the lungs acting as the main filter,” explained Graves. “Add to this, e-cigs were only invented 10 years ago, so there are no long term e-cig users to really know what kind of health impact they might have, long term.”

For Graves, the annual Great American Smoke Out provides an strong reminder that anyone who uses any tobacco product can quit with a little help from him and other resources at NHB like Health Promotion and Wellness Department.

“We want users to make a plan and commit to seeing it through. They can set themselves up to succeed with professional support and support from family and friends. They need to remember why they wanted to quit in the first place and why quitting is important. They can write down the reason or reasons why they want to quit and then visually remind themselves why they are stopping the nicotine habit.”

Graves notes that tobacco usage can also compromise the mission of any service member. Quitting improves a person’s night vision, mental activity; decreases the need for water; increases lung capacity; decreases injuries and accidents; increases stamina; improves fine

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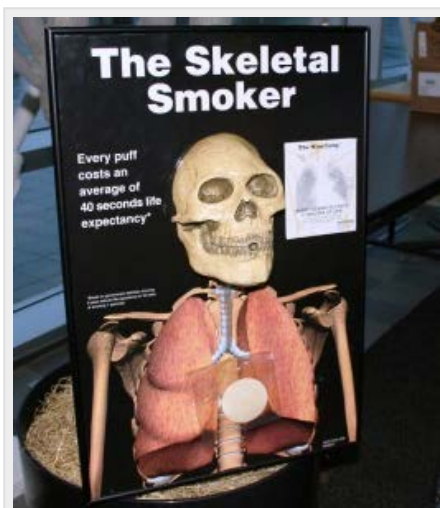
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motor coordination and increases the ability to manage stress.

There are any number of reasons why a person started using tobacco. There's also a host of rationalizations that a user will fall back on to convince others, as well as themselves that it's okay to still go ahead and smoke or dip.

Graves cites several common sense reasons why a person should quit using tobacco products.

"We all know the downside of smoking and chewing. It's been well-documented. Is there any upside?" said Graves, sharing that tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year, an estimated 443,000 people die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million live with a serious illness caused by smoking. Despite these risks, approximately 46.6 million U.S. adults smoke cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco, cigars, and pipes also have deadly consequences, including lung, larynx, esophageal, and oral cancers.



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Additionally, the harmful effects of smoking impact more than just the smoker. An estimated 88 million nonsmoking Americans, including 54 percent of children aged 3–11 years, are exposed to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure can be dangerous because nonsmokers inhale many of the same poisons in cigarette smoke as smokers.

"The life a smoker saves may be their own. Or that of a family member or friend," said Graves.

If smokers know about the negative health risks and still continue to use and abuse, perhaps another way to get through is to remind them that the addictive habit is just their hard-earned money going up in smoke. A smoker can give themselves over a \$3,000 a year raise by quitting. The average cost of cigarettes per pack in Washington is \$9.30, which is up from \$8.31 last year. Multiple that amount by daily use and the monthly cost is

\$279.00 or about the difference between E4-E5 over 6 years – an astounding annual total of \$3,394.50.

And what if medical reasoning and fiscal benefits don't do the trick to break through the addictive shield?

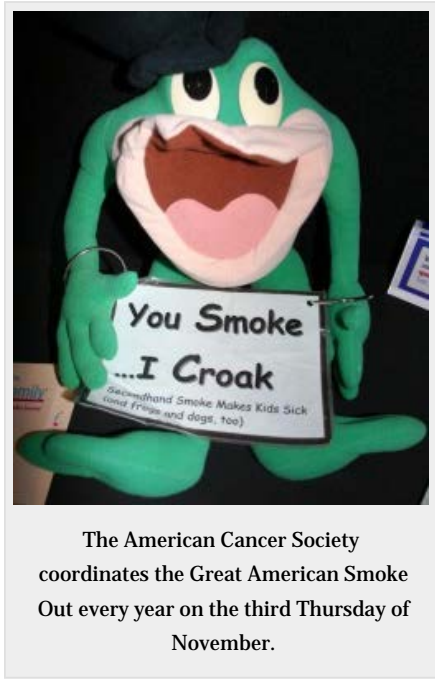
"The goal as I see it is to never give up on anyone. Maybe I can explain to them that no one really likes kissing an ashcan, or being in close proximity with someone who smells like a chimney. There are also intangible benefits such as setting a good example for family, friends and co-workers. A person can live longer and healthier. Really!" stated Graves, adding that a person has to stick with it. "They got to prepare for challenges. They can even practice what to say and do when someone offers them a cigarette or dip or invites them to join in the old habit. The cravings will pass but a person has to resist the urge to use tobacco. The cravings usually last about three minutes. A person can help themselves by changing their thoughts about giving in to the old habit. They can call me, call a friend, have a drink some water, or simply take a walk. I also recommend that a person can just reaffirm to themselves why they

quit and the benefits they’re getting.”

The American Cancer Society coordinates the Great American Smoke Out every year on the third Thursday of November. From the initial event in the 1970s when smoking and secondhand smoke were commonplace, the goal remains to reach smokers across the nation to use the date and make a plan to quit, or plan in advance and then quit smoking that day.

NHB follows the format and uses the annual event to educate, entertain and challenges people to stop using tobacco and helps people know about the many tools they can use to quit and stay quit. ACS research shows that smokers are most successful in kicking the habit when they have support, such as what NHB offers – “in one variety/form or another!” states Graves – Telephone smoking-cessation hotlines; Stop-smoking groups; Online quit groups; Counseling; Nicotine replacement products; Prescription medicine to lessen cravings; Guide books; and Encouragement and support from friends and family members. Using two or more of these measures are advocated to help anyone quit smoking.

NHB Tobacco Cessation has the resources to help anyone to quit and stay quit. For an appointment with Tobacco Cessation please call: 360- 475-4818. For NHB Health Promotion programs for command or military community group please call: 360-475-4541.



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